

TOWN OF UNION

<http://www.union.govoffice2.com/>

March 2011

Now that we have our list-serve up and running I will be sending out periodic information of what is going on in Town. This newsletter is not meant to give you the information that is available from our online agendas and minutes but for those “extra” bits of information that may interest you.

ROADS AND RUMORS: You may or may not know that the Town Manager also serves as the Road Commissioner which is a standard practice in most Towns our size. As you can guess our highway budget was hit hard this year and although we probably will not overdraft the account, we certainly will not lapse several thousands of dollars into fund balance this year. And contrary to rumors we **have not** run out of sand!

For those of you that live on unpaved roads you have seen one of those unique springs with lots of melting and mud galore! If the weather will finally break we should be near the end of mud season and will be heading out to grade those potholes out! Much of our remaining road construction budget will be used on these roads as we haul in “inch minus” and reclaim just before we grade.

During the warmer months we will begin our preparations for the paving of Sennebec Road. Due to the expected increase in paving cost, Sennebec road may be a two year project. We will however prepare the entire road for paving, this will include replacing all the steel culverts with plastic, ditching and preparing shoulders.

BUDGETS: I thought it might be helpful to take a sentence or two to explain how budgets are prepared. Our Town runs on a fiscal year of July 1 to June 30, so the budget process begins as early as November or December. The Town Manager (TM) notifies all departments to prepare their budget and have them in house usually by the end of January. This year we asked that each department look for 5% savings and explain why if they can’t achieve those. Once the budget figures are in to the TM the manager makes changes that he sees necessary and then forwards the budget to the Selectmen.

The Selectmen review each department and make any changes to the TM budget they see fit. They may add, subtract or remove any or all amounts. Once this process has been completed the budget goes to the Budget Committee for review, they budget committee reviews and **recommends only**. Budget committees do not have authority to change the amounts but their recommendations, if different from the Selectmen, are listed on the warrant and carry considerable clout during the annual Town Meeting.

It is important to note that all these meetings are open to the public. Being open to the public does not necessarily mean you have unlimited discussion during the proceedings, however most chairpersons are willing to take some brief comments and suggestions. Once the budget committee has finished the Town Manager prepares the warrant articles and the Board of Selectmen may change any figures before signing the warrant. The next step is up to you! Attend the Town Meeting and vote on each article.

- *Interesting foot note: The Town of Unions Board of Selectmen have not increased the Town budget the past two years. This upcoming year the budget presented thus far also shows a slight decrease.*

SCHOOL AND COUNTY ASSESSMENTS: Two major impacts on your taxes are School and County budgets, the Board of Selectmen have no say in these figures. These budgets are done by your elected officials in each of those forms of government.

TAX COLLECTOR: Tax Collector Marcy Corwin wants to remind everyone that the second installment of taxes is due May 15, 2011 which falls on a Sunday. What that means is that you have one extra day and they will not be late until after 4:00 PM on May 16, 2011.

NOMINATION PAPERS AVAILABLE: This is your chance! Nomination papers for Selectmen, School Board and Treasurer are now available. Selectmen and School Board are paid small stipends, the Treasurer position is a full-time paid position with benefits. If interested please come in the Town Office to pick up nomination papers.

QUESTIONS? I recently read an editorial, (one thing about editorials is that they are one persons opinion and don't always reflect the way things truly are) anyway it stated that officials in Town are not willing or happy to give out information and do not welcome public input. NOT TRUE! Anyone who does not have the information has not requested it, plain and simple. All information that by law is public is always available to anyone who requests, simply stop with your written request or e-mail and we are glad to provide it (if it can't be sent electronically there is a small copying fee). If you have questions about budgets, policies, etc, I welcome you to stop in anytime and ask questions.

Quite frankly I believe the Town of Union is a leader in being open and upfront, when I began here I initiated a "public informational meeting" where all topics were open for discussion and explanation. We have received some excellent comments on this type of meeting and the BOS plan to continue these. You are welcome anytime to come in my office to discuss town government and I look forward to discussing it with you.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER:

1. April 2, 8:00 AM, a special selectmen's meeting to work on the budget. This is an official meeting and votes can be taken so come enjoy a rare Saturday meeting. (bring me a donut)
2. April 5, 2011, our regular Board meeting begins at 6:00 with a Pullen Committee meeting and then the regular meeting at around 6:30. This is the final budget night and the Selectmen send their budget off to the Budget Committee.
3. June 20, Town Meeting, you can even buy a meal from the Ambulance and Fire Departments as they will be cooking.

Make sure to check the web site for other meetings and information.